

**Blind Task Force Meeting
February 10, 2004
CISE (Center for Innovations in Special Education)
Parkade Center, Suite 152, Room 11
Columbia, Missouri**

Members Present:

Grenetha Baldwin
Karen Berley
Steve Berman
Donna Borgmeyer

Cindy Dowis
Debbi Head
Kent Kolaga
Russ McCampbell

Samuel Moore
Joe Sartorius
Jim Sucharski
Sheila Wright

Guests Present:

Pam Arbeiter
Roselie Backer
Aundrayah Shermer

DESE Staff Present :

Kim Bruce
Lori Conner
Mary Corey

Members Not Present:

Chris Craig
Melodie Friedebach
David Leyland
Dennis Miller

Call to Order/Introductions - Debbi Head called the meeting to order at approximately 10:15 a.m. Roll call was taken by Steve Berman, Blind Task Force Secretary.

Approval of Minutes - The minutes from the December meeting were reviewed by the attendees and two corrections were made as follows:

- 1) Kent Kolaga asked that the notes concerning the VI Certification Committee be corrected as follows: The sentence in the twelfth line ("Kent Kolaga indicated that his office reviews and maintains files on transcripts") should be deleted. Chris Craig has indicated that it be changed to read as follows: "Chris Craig indicated that he made a proposal for SMSU to review and maintain files on transcripts."
- 2) There was a correction relating to the section on the Blind Skills Specialists report as follows: In the second paragraph, first line, the minutes should read "Aundrayah Shermer presented two paraprofessional trainings in Spring 2003." The minutes from the December meeting indicated that she had attended those training sessions. In addition, the second paragraph, fourth line should read "She also organized the two-day workshop led by Susan Osterhaus" instead of indicating that she had simply attended the conference.

The Blind Task Force Secretary will make the recommended changes and submit the updated copy of the minutes to DESE for posting on the Blind Task Force Website.

Upcoming Meeting Dates - Steve Berman double-checked the upcoming meeting dates with those present. The dates stand as stated in the December minutes. (The preference of the group for a meeting site is the Center for Innovations in Special Education CISE).

Russ McCampbell made a motion to accept the December minutes as corrected. The motion was seconded by Kent Kolaga and was passed unanimously by the members present. The approved minutes will be posted on the internet.

Agenda Review - Joe Sartorius indicated that Mary Corey and Karen Berley had to leave the meeting early. Debbi Head indicated that she would like to announce information about upcoming workshops and the Power-Up conference. These announcements will be placed between items d and e on agenda item #9. Jim Sucharski made a motion to accept the agenda as corrected. The motion was seconded by Grenetha Baldwin and passed unanimously by the members present.

Standing Committee Updates

- **Annual Study Committee** - Mary Corey indicated that input on the study was to be sent to the subcommittee by February 1 and discussed at today's meeting. Subcommittee members are Cindy Dowis, Grenetha Baldwin and Debbi Head. Kent Kolaga indicated that he had received three sets of data tables on the MAP and asked Mary Corey which of the tables was most indicative of actual student literacy. He indicated that the issue of actual student reading literacy was not really discussed in the annual survey. Mary Corey indicated that next year's survey would more closely follow the guidelines for literacy. Kent Kolaga also asked Mary if it was possible to use the APH data to create a map indicating exactly where in the state of Missouri students were reading on or above grade level and where students were reading below grade level. Mary indicated that this was possible for DESE to do. Debbi Head indicated that the DESE registry is most likely missing an unknown number of VI students due to the fact that the state, in doing the Child Count lists, does not necessarily use VI as the primary handicapping condition. Mary indicated that it would be possible to compile two different counts to reflect the difference in the APH numbers and the DESE numbers for VI students in Missouri. Russ McCampbell asked Mary Corey how soon the MAP information could be generated. Mary indicated that she is waiting until the last year's final child count numbers are completely in the system. The numbers for the APH count will be finalized by February 2. MSB is in the process of completing the count and will have all numbers available by February 25. She indicated that the DESE child count and APH numbers will reflect both the current and previous school years. Several committee members indicated that the number of VI students reported in the DESE child count are not an accurate reflection of the real number of VI students in Missouri, due in part to the fact that many early childhood students with visual impairments are reported as YCCD as opposed to visually impaired. The APH numbers are a much more accurate reflection of the number of VI students. Joe Sartorius indicated that the annual literacy study should be geared more to long-range trend information and geared

toward giving suggestions as to what directions the data indicates the committee should go in terms of improving student literacy. Pam Arbeiter indicated that other sources could also be used to gain a more realistic picture of the number of VI students in Missouri (First Steps, home-schooled kids, etc.) Kent Kolaga indicated that he hopes that RSB will be able to begin to register more birth-to-three-year-olds to further gain a more accurate picture of the number of VI students in Missouri. Kent Kolaga indicated that he has a concern that children in the more rural areas are not being reported to APH or DESE as visually impaired. Jim Sucharski indicated that MSB will work on this problem to find out where gaps in reporting are.

- **MAP Review and Discussion** - Debbi Head asked Mary Corey to gather information concerning how blind and visually impaired students have performed on the MAP test. Mary indicated that the MAP test results list separate test scores for blind students and partially sighted students. She stated that there is a good chance that the two categories will be combined into one category known as “visually impaired.” Mary indicated that the number of visually impaired and blind students taking the MAP test are fairly low so that gaining reliable information as to trends in literacy is very difficult. Karen Berley indicated that the test results could further be affected by how the kids are taking the MAP test (orally or in a one-to-one situation, for example). Kent Kolaga indicated that it seemed that the MAP test results are used primarily to assess district achievement rather than individual student achievement. He also raised concerns similar to Karen Berley’s concerns. He raised concerns that accommodations are somehow invalidating the test results (reading the test to a student, while a reasonable accommodation may not necessarily be a way of measuring literacy). Joe Sartorius indicated that there needs to be a further study as to what the test results are indicating and what kind of improvements need to be made to insure a more reliable measure of student achievement and literacy. The MAP results supplied by Mary Corey indicated that a trend over several years seems to indicate that there has been a slight improvement in student performance with blind students performing slightly better than partially-sighted students in reading skills. Cindy Dowis indicated that the expectation is that blind and partially-sighted students should be reading at or above grade level but in many cases this tends not to be true. Grenetha Baldwin indicated that she has noticed a trend in which a lot of visually impaired students are being reclassified as LD as they move through the grade levels and that this may be affecting their access to large print versions of the MAP test. Debbi Head indicated that great effort has been made to assure that blind students have a correct Braille version of the MAP test but that the study of the large print version of the test has not been as thorough. APH is taking the lead on a national basis to assure that both Braille and large print versions of the MAP test are correct and fair. Russ McCampbell indicated that it is important to have a small subcommittee review the entire MAP test as it pertains to visually impaired students. Kim Bruce indicated that she would be willing to chair such a committee.

- **Governmental Affairs Committee** - Sheila Wright indicated that the Instructional Materials Accessibility Act as well as the IDEA act are now in various stages of committee conferences. There is a general feeling among the legislators that some version of the IMAA will be passed this year despite the fact that the Senate version and the House version of the bill seem to be different. Sheila also indicated that there apparently is no additional funding being given to DESE for an additional Blind Skills Specialist in Missouri. There will be pressure put on the appropriation committees to find extra funds for the BSS program.
- **Transition Committee** - This is not currently a standing committee.
- **Ad-Hoc Committee Updates** - Sheila Wright asked Debbi Head to review the by-laws. The task force discussed changing the by-laws to read “vice-chair” instead of “chair-elect.” Joe Sartorius made a motion to amend the by-laws to read “vice-chair.” The motion was seconded by Cindy Dowis and Sheila Wright. The motion was passed unanimously. Kent Kolaga made a motion to amend the by-laws to indicate that the by-laws could be changed at any Blind Task Force meeting. Samuel Moore seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously.
- **VI Certification Committee** - Kent Kolaga distributed handouts of the committee’s report and gave the disk to Lori Conner to send to Task Force members via e-mail. The whole certification process is centered around teacher competencies related to working with the blind and visually impaired. The competencies are listed on the DESE website. In the state of Missouri there are basically two routes to certification as a teacher of the blind and visually impaired. One of the routes is to have transcripts evaluated by Rusty Rosenkoetter and Sandy Wadley at the DESE Teacher Certification office. For those teachers who have come from out of state with a valid VI certification, the state of Missouri is now able to recognize that VI certification, and grant Missouri certification to that person without having to take the praxis test. The praxis test is essentially being used now as an exit test from a teacher-training program as a means of measuring basic knowledge and competencies for new teachers. The praxis is also being used with people with elementary or secondary teaching certificates who have not taken formal VI coursework. Kent Kolaga indicated that Mike Walker is looking at competencies to determine whether they are truly indicative of the skills necessary to be an effective teacher of the blind and visually impaired. Russ McCampbell indicated that the Task Force could use Chris Craig’s leadership at SMSU to develop a letter addressed to Dr. Walker from the Task Force, indicating that something needs to be done about the add-on courses that have at times made it very difficult for people who are already certified teachers to become certified as VI teachers. Russ McCampbell made a motion to have the Task Force continue to work on issues related to VI certification and to continue to work with Mike Walker and Chris Craig to make the certification process easier. As mentioned in previous minutes, the easier it

becomes for VI certification to occur, the lesser will be the problem of the teacher shortage in the area of VI.

National Agenda Update - Jim Sucharski indicated there are no new updates since the last Blind Task Force meeting.

Current Issues - Debbi Head indicated that there are currently three standing committees under the by-laws. These committees are the Annual Study Committee, the Governmental Affairs Committee, and the Transition Committee. The focus of the Annual Study Committee is literacy. This committee is responsible for working with DESE to define what is to be included in the annual study, interpret data and give suggestions regarding new data to include or exclude from the Annual Study. The Governmental Affairs Committee has as its focus to keep the Task Force updated on what is going on legislatively at both the state and federal levels. The Transition Committee is responsible for looking at students of all ages and at all levels of transition, to study transition plans and how districts are providing services. It also includes collaboration between DESE and RSB to support transitions for students age 14 and older. Joe Sartorius indicated that each member of the Task Force should be on one of the three committees. Sheila Wright indicated that she and Dennis Miller would continue to volunteer for the Governmental Affairs Committee, with Sheila remaining as the chair. Donna Borgmeyer and Samuel Moore also volunteered to be on the Governmental Affairs Committee. Grenetha Baldwin, Kent Kolaga, Karen Berley, and Jim Sucharski volunteered to be on the Transition Committee. Jim Sucharski volunteered to chair this committee. Steve Berman, Kim Bruce, Joe Sartorius, Russ McCampbell, Debbi Head, and Cindy Dowis volunteered to be on the Annual Study Committee, with Steve Berman acting as the chair.

Blind Skills Specialist Update - Kim Bruce indicated that a letter of intent for a Blind Skills Specialist has been sent to Truman State University in Kirksville by DESE. DESE is also working on obtaining funding for a fourth Blind Skills Specialist to be located in the St. Louis area and to be associated with UMSL. Kent Kolaga made a motion that the Task Force encourage DESE to speed up this process of creating the two additional positions. The motion passed unanimously.

Task Force Membership - The Blind Task Force is currently at full membership. Dennis Miller, Cindy Dowis, Joe Sartorius, Sheila Wright, and Grenetha Baldwin will all receive letters of reappointment. The consensus among the members present was that there is no need for any additions to the Task Force membership at the present time. Debbi Head indicated that the complete membership of the Task Force, meeting dates and locations, and all minutes of previous meetings will be posted on the DESE website.

Lunch Menu - Debbi Head asked for suggestions from the Task Force on menu items for future lunches. It was suggested that there be three choices that members could choose from. The choices mentioned were a salad, chicken, or beef menu items.

Financial Update - Kim Bruce gave an update on the Blind Literacy Funds as of January 14, 2004 and indicated that the Professional Development Funds have been appropriated at the \$140,000 level, with \$42,948 expended, leaving a balance of \$97,052. The Blind Literacy Fund appropriated \$82,150, with \$1,189 expended, leaving a balance of \$80,960. Debbi Head requested that up to \$5,000 from the Blind Task Force's balance be appropriated for the Power-UP conference.

Governor's Council for Disabilities Update - Donna Borgmeyer indicated that her group publishes a weekly update on bills affecting disabled persons. She also indicated that her group is sponsoring a Youth Leadership Forum in Columbia in July. This will be open to high school sophomores and juniors with disabilities and will have as its focus providing training in the area of assisting other disabled students in making the transition from secondary to post-secondary placements. Donna also indicated that the deadline for the Poster Contest on disabilities was in March. She had distributed material on this contest at the previous Blind Task Force meeting in December.

Plans for Future Meetings - The next three meetings of the Blind Task Force will be as follows:

- May 11, 2004 at CISE Center in Columbia, Missouri
- September 15, 2004 at a site to be determined
- December 8, 2004 at a site to be determined

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.